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## Viewing cable 08BOGOTA2387, POLO PARTY: FAR LEFT CONSOLIDATES POWER

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Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
<a href="#">08BOGOTA2387</a>	<a href="#">2008-07-01 21:55</a>	<a href="#">2011-08-30 01:44</a>	<a href="#">CONFIDENTIAL</a>	<a href="#">Embassy Bogota</a>

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.elespectador.com/noticias/wikileaks/articulo-259932-moderados-y-extremos-el-polo>

VZCZCXYZ0000  
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #2387/01 1832155  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 012155Z JUL 08  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3431  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8270  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0639  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 6321  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1942  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1329  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6985  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHMFIUU/FBI WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY  
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 002387

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/01/2018  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: POLO PARTY: FAR LEFT CONSOLIDATES POWER

Classified By: Political Counselor John Creamer  
Reasons 1.4 (b and d)

#### SUMMARY

1. (C) The opposition Polo Democratico Party is becoming increasingly dominated by the far-left, with Party moderates such as former Bogota Mayor LuchoGarzon distancing themselves from the group. The Party's decision to fire moderate Secretary General Daniel Garcia Pena ahead of a critical Party Congress in February, 2009 will likely lead to continued dominance of the party machinery by orthodox Communists, Maoists, and Chavistas. Polo President Carlos Gaviria told us he would not run again in 2010, but admitted he will face heavy pressure to carry the far left's banner. Former Bogota Mayor LuchoGarzon told us it would be better for the left in the long run if the Polo split, allowing moderates to move forward with a social democratic agenda untainted by the FARC or Venezuelan President Chavez. End summary.

#### LEADERSHIP CHANGES A BAD SIGN

2. (C) Polo DemocraticoAlternativo Party Secretary General Daniel Garcia Pena was forced from his job the week of June 9 after far-left Party President Carlos Gaviria threatened to resign if Garcia remained. Garcia told us that he was relieved to be out of the "Polo circus," noting the hard left had opposed his effort to promote a more pragmatic, open party. Garcia said problems with campaign finance from October local elections and a poor Polo showing gave Gaviria the excuse he needed to oust him. Gaviria claimed Garcia's removal was done for financial, not political, reasons. Gaviria said he saw no signs that Garcia engaged in any wrongdoing, but alleged that Garcia spent \$750,000 on the campaign without authorization or documentation--\$500,000 more than was authorized by the Party.

3. (C) LuchoGarzon and former Valle de Cauca Governor Angelino Garzon (no relation) -- two of Colombia's most respected leftist politicians -- told us Garcia's removal represented a victory for Polo's far-left, including orthodox Communists, Maoists, and Chavistas. The two Garzons said Maoist Senator Enrique Robledo --with Gaviria's support -- orchestrated Garcia's removal. LuchoGarzon called Robledo's faction "the contras," saying they oppose everything, including Uribe's democratic security policy, free trade, extradition, drug fumigation, and political reform.

4. (SBU) TheGarzons said party rules require that a new Secretary General be approved by 80% of the Polo Executive Committee--a near impossibility due to the splits caused by Garcia's ouster. If the Secretary General post remains vacant, they concluded that Polo hard-liners will have a significant advantage in the internal August party elections, as well as the Party Congress in February, 2009 that will set the Polo's policies and leadership ahead of the 2010 presidential and congressional elections.

#### CENTRISTS MAINTAIN DISTANCE

5. (C) The Polo's highest-profile and most experienced figures -- Lucho Garzon and NarinoGovernor Antonio Navarro Wolff -- do not hold Polo leadership positions nor participate in Party meetings due to the party's "closed and extreme" policies. LuchoGarzon met with ex-president and Liberal Party chief Cesar Gaviria on June 16 to discuss a possible alliance to block a third Uribe term and to seek a "consensus" opposition presidential candidate for 2010. Lucho told us that he hoped his approach to the Liberals would lead the Polo to expel him from the party. Angelino Garzon told us the Polo's far-left wing of the Party is moving towards a pyrrhic victory, gaining internal power at the expense of the party's long-term unity and political viability.

¶6. (C) Mayor of Bogota Samuel Moreno, who won under the Polo banner in October, has stayed out of the Party's squabbles, and generally followed Lucho's pragmatic and moderate line on security and trade. Moreno met with U.S. Senator Barack Obama in Miami on June 20, at the National Mayor's Conference and invited Obama to visit Bogota. Garcia told us that Moreno had previously offered him jobs in the Mayor's office, including a new position as the Bogota "Foreign Minister." Still, Moreno relied on the support of the party's hard left factions to win the Polo mayoral primary last year.

#### PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE UNCERTAIN

¶7. (C) The Polo does not have an obvious front-runner for its 2010 presidential candidate, and many key figures either remain outside the party or claim they will not run. Garcia told us LuchoGarzon's overture to the Liberals further frayed his already tenuous ties with Polo leaders, and would make it difficult for him to be the Polo's candidate. Carlos Gaviria, who finished a distant second to Uribe in 2006 (but with a record number of votes for a leftist candidate), told us on June 26 he would not run again in 2010. Gaviria is the far-left's favorite son, and Gaviria said he expects "huge pressure" to join the race from that segment since they have no other viable candidate. Carlos and Cesar Gaviria also met on May 18, and agreed to work together to block a third term for President Uribe.

¶8. (C) Carlos Gaviria told us he would support Senator Gustavo Petro (former M-19) for president. Petro, who has moved from a close Chavez friend and 21st Century Socialist towards the more moderate Lucho wing of the Polo in the past year, has also distanced himself from the Party leadership. Petro has been a Party "free agent," condemning the FARC, anachronistic Polo security policies, and Uribe with equal fervor. Garcia told us that Petro's former-Chavista supporters (20% of Polo activists) found themselves "lost and leaderless" after Petro's defection to the center-left.

#### POLO, FARC, CHAVEZ

¶9. (C) Both Polo leaders and dissidents confirmed that the FARC, and to a lesser extent Chavez, remained the biggest obstacles to the left's political ambitions in Colombia. LuchoGarzon told us the unreconstructed left could not resist the temptation to rhetorically sympathize with the FARC's "all forms of struggle." This "justifiably doomed" the Polo's chances in general elections given Colombia's historically right-of-center electorate. The Prosecutor General's (Fiscalia) request last May that the Supreme Court investigate Polo Senator Gloria Ines Ramirez and Representative Wilson Borja for possible ties to the FARC based on information in the Raul Reyes computers added to the Polo's problems.

¶10. (C) Carlos Gaviria said Chavez represented "the biggest challenge for the progressive left in Latin America." His "undemocratic populist" acts damaged the efforts of real reformers the same way that the FARC's cooption of issues like land reform or indigenous rights harmed the Colombian left. LuchoGarzon, who told us he had rejected repeated offers of "assistance" from Chavez (cash, physicians, food) while mayor, concluded that it would be difficult for the Polo to remain intact given its growing ideological divisions. It would be better for the left in the long-run if the Party split, allowing moderates to move ahead with a social democratic agenda untainted by the FARC or Chavez.

#### BROWNFIELD

=====CABLE ENDS=====